

Woodburn (Charles Hillyard House)
Kings Highway
Dover
Kent County
Delaware

HABS No. DEL-146

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WOODBURN (CHARLES HILLYARD HOUSE)

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Location: Kings Highway, Dover, Kent County,
Delaware

Present Owner: Mr. Thomas Murray

Brief Statement
of Significance: Built in 1790, this house has the
characteristic features of the period
and place, but is of larger scale than
most and has unusually extensive wood-
work of very high quality.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

Woodburn, on the King's Highway in Dover, was built by Charles Hillyard in 1790. It is one of the finest Middle Georgian houses in Delaware. Both the exterior and the interior of this three-bay, two-story-and-attic brick house convey an unusual sense of amplitude and stability. The proportions are particularly generous and the absence of dormers contributes an air of staunch solidity to the entire mass of the structure.

The brickwork of the north and south fronts is laid in Flemish bond; the walls of the ends are in Liverpool (common) bond ---- a common eighteenth-century manner of combination. The belt course is five bricks in width without any central recess. This detail adds to the robust quality of the walls. The water-table is topped by two courses of moulded bricks instead of the more usual single course.

The lintels above the windows are of cut stone, a feature to be noted in southern Delaware where it was so often impossible to get cut stone in the eighteenth century and wood, painted white, was used in its stead to produce the desired architectural effect.

The verandah with fluted columns, extending across the whole south front, is an addition of much later date than the house itself.

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The plan of Woodburn is very simple ---- a wide hall at the west end flanking a large parlour (facing north) and an equally large dining-room (facing south). This plan is repeated on the upper floor. One cannot help wondering whether the lower two-story kitchen wing, attached to the east end of the main block, may not have been an earlier building (as in so many comparable cases), and whether, had it not been there, the main block of the house might not have been made five bays wide. The kitchen wing has undergone too many changes to form any opinion regarding date.

The woodwork throughout the house has always quite deservedly been a source of pride to the owners of Woodburn. It is robust in design, abundant in quantity, and of the highest quality. Despite the date, the design is distinctly Middle Georgian with a strong bias towards dog-eared. The beautifully executed cornices are of wood. Fine paneling is not confined to chimney-breasts or to whole room-ends; it is seen in the window-seats and in the dados around all the walls in parlour, dining-room and hall.

Prepared by Harold Donaldson Eberlein
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
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